grating is put together, are not simply set in crosswise, but are inter- 342
twined in more or less complicated ways into arabesques. One of the
simplest forms of this window grating is that shown in Figure 88. The
basic form of the alabaster grating is often an imitation of the wooden
grating. During the winter these window gratings are often covered
with white cigarette paper or with writing paper treated with oil to
keep out the draughts of air. The interior of the dwellings is almost
always veiled in half darkness because of the lack of windows, and
the /239/ wide projecting roofs of the verandas; and when the door
wings are open one can read or do close work right next to the door
(cf. Figure 72, p. 201, and Figure 79, p. 223). /Figure 88. Caption:
Window Grating of Turkestan./

Just inside the main entrance of the living quarters is a square
recess which serves as a washing and bathing place, a place where
one can pour water, and for the removal of overshoes.

The floor of the room consists simply of clay, and is always [352]
covered with a plain reed mat or felt covering, depending on the
financial means of the owner, or with a greater or smaller number
of costly carpets.

For ventilation there is an opening in the roof in which a short
cylindrical pipe of burned clay is placed. Since rain and snow can
enter unhindered through this opening, the ventilation openings are
often found also in the sides of the walls just under the roof.

Room furniture in the dwellings of the Central Asians is either 352
completely absent or is found in very small quantity. They have no 342
idea of tables, chairs, couches and our many cupboards and chests
of drawers. In place of our clothing and kitchen cupboards and
chests of drawers, in Turkestan various niches are fixed in the walls
for this purpose, occupying all four walls of the room as a rule. These
niches are either simple recesses in the walls, like our blind windows,
or they are partitions made artistically of alabaster, as can be seen
in Figure 123. These niches serve for the hanging up of clothes and
underwear and for the storage of dinner plates, wash basins, water
pitchers and teapots, water pipes, candlesticks, preserves and food,
occasional books, and the like. As for real furniture, the natives of
Turkestan are only acquainted with bedsteads, cradles, chests, and
the small low table already mentioned for the coal pan.

The poorer population and also a good part of the rich simply 513
sleep on the floor. A blanket serves as a bed, over which one or more
quilted cotton covers are spread, depending on what can be afforded.

513 A quilted cotton cover serves likewise as a top covering but it is of finer material than the one underneath. Quilted covers of silk and silk mixed with cotton are not rare. They are usually about two meters square, so that at times of extreme /240/ cold they can be wrapped all the way around. On my journeys I have camped in the open under such covers, sometimes in a cold of 20° to 30° centigrade, and have been quite comfortable. The natives do not know of sheets; as a result the bed covers, which cannot be washed because of their quilting, leave much to be desired as regards cleanliness after being used for some time. During the day the bed covers are rolled up together and stacked up along the walls with the pillows. For pillows they use cylinders stuffed with cotton and covered with silk or cotton material, similar to our window cushions, which are definitely preferable according to my experience to the feather head pillows used in Europe for they are not only more hygienic but also more comfortable. Only the very rich allow themselves the luxury of bedsteads.

[352] The bedsteads in Turkestan, the arrangement of which may be seen in Figure 89, p. 734, in spite of their simplicity are the most suitable I have ever seen, and no improvement of our bedsteads, no matter how refined, can compete with them. They combine the advantages of ordinary bedsteads with those of American hammocks and can satisfy the demands of the most pampered sybarite. I have grown so spoiled by using Turkestan bedsteads over many years, that even now I have not yet been able to reconcile myself to the European bed. The bedsteads of Turkestan consist of a wooden frame joined together from a rough beam about ten centimeters thick, resting on four turned legs each about half a meter high, and this frame is covered by a net of thin strings made of horsehair. The bedsteads are something over two meters long and from one to one and a half meters wide. When such a framework is covered with a half dozen soft quilted cotton covers, it affords the greatest comfort imaginable. The body assumes its most comfortable position, thanks to the elasticity of the horsehair net, and one can stretch out on all sides without hindrance and without ever feeling the slightest pressure. If one is contented with a single cover during the hot season, one has a cool bed and need not suffer under the unbearable and unwholsome heat which the European featherbeds produce.

854 The cradles are portable, with a frame covered with a fly net of transparent gauze material, which serves as well for rocking as for carrying the infants. Their arrangement makes one think of a bird cage or of the frames used in Munich for the carrying of large numbers of beermugs (Figure 90, p. 736; cf. also Figure 157). The heads